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SACRED FIRE

An Anthropology and Spirituality of Sexuality

Part 1

Our Struggles with Sexuality

The Universal Struggle With Sexuality - No Easy Peace Anywhere

The Power Of Sexuality

- Plato - madness that comes from the gods
- Sexuality as fire from the gods
- Most powerful fire in the world - for love and ecstasy and for murder and suicide
- Our Current Cultural Inability To Initiate Sexual Energy In Our Present Culture
 1. The need for and the absence of effective initiation rites
 2. The consequences...
 - Sexual energy as not connected enough to the heart, to fertility, to family, to community
 - Sexual energy as reduced to genitality
 - Sexual energy as over-idealized, as soteriology
 - Sexual energy as cut off from the divine - as purely secular and even as “ungodly”
 - Our current cultural myths about sexuality - the myths...
 - i) “I cannot be a happy, wholesome human being unless I am having sex.”
 - ii) “I can have detached, recreational, casual sex.”
 - iii) “I am having safe and responsible sex if I am responsible regarding contraception and sexually transmitted diseases”
 - iv) “Sex is ultimately about orgasms, not about glue in the soul.”
 - v) “We become more free sexually and humanly as we shed old taboos of chastity and restraint. Passion and chastity oppose each other.”
 - vi) “Friendships when sexual tension is involved are existentially impossible.”
 - vii) “Our sexual instinct is at odds with our religious instinct.”

The Divorce Between Sexuality and Spirituality Towards an Anthropology and Spirituality of sexuality

- An Anthropology of Sexuality
 - 1) Sexuality as “Divine Fire” and as the source of our energy
 - SECARE - Sexuality as a dimension of self-awareness, the sense of having been cut off, pervasive at every level of our being

Sexuality and genitality (“having sex”) - as not identical

- Sexuality - “It is not good to be alone.”

The drive for community, friendship, wholeness, family, creativity, play, meaning that is trans-personal, altruism, immortality, enjoyment, delight, “the garden,” consummation and everything that takes us beyond aloneness.

- Genitality - “The hunger for the two becoming one flesh.”

Having sex. Particularized consummation.

- Sexuality - Its Developmental Stages

Pre-puberty...containable curiosity

Puberty...bewildering heat with a genital focus

Initial maturity...the desire for intimacy

Growing maturity...the desire for children

Full maturity...the desire to share in God’s creativity and blessing

- The Greek idea of EROS as containing six interpenetrating elements: eros; mania, ludens, pragma, philia, and agape - and the idea of integration
- Towards A Mature Definition of Sexuality.

END OF PART 1

PART 2

Towards A Spirituality of sexuality - Sex as “Divine Fire”

1. Some non-negotiable points about sexuality

- It is good
- It is sacred
- It is powerful (and often unfriendly)
- It needs a certain “chastity” to protect it
- It is a perpetual “dis-ease”

2. Sexuality - As exclusive to a marriage relationship.

3. The Christian Notion of chastity - as nurturing and protecting

- A story - Allan Bloom on chastity...why our “eros has gone lame.”

- o The Concept of Chastity

Chastity is not the same as celibacy

Chastity is not frigidity

Chastity is not an exclusively sexual concept, but pertains to an attitude and way of experiencing...as having our shoes off before the burning bush. (5 things applied here)

- Chastity as proper reverence and respect

...as not violating others or the proper order of things

-Chastity as waiting, as patience

...as letting gift be gift, as never pre-empting

...as not experiencing prematurely (as not violating innocence)

- ...as sublimation in view of the sublime
- Chastity as “pondering” - as carrying our solitude at a high level
 - ...as carrying tension for the community as “carrying our solitude at a high level”
 - ...as never being amazed
- Chastity as heightening the joy and goodness of sexuality
 - ...as surrounding it with high symbol
 - ...as making sure that our eros does not go lame
- Chastity and, at time, conscriptive celibacy - as a privileged opportunity to be in solidarity with the poor.

End of part 2

Part 3

Our struggles to produce a healthy spirituality of sexuality...

1. The Obstacles...
 - i. The power of sexuality itself and our non-easy capacity to make peace with it.
 - ii. Our celibate and monastic tradition within spirituality
 - iii. Our struggle to accept the goodness of sexuality and to accept its “divine” qualities
 - iv. Our theology of God - as “a male celibate”
 - v. Our present cultural myths about sexuality, particularly its focus on one aspect of sexuality - romance and having sex

2. The path ahead...searching for a new health
 - i. Befriending, enjoying, and celebrating sexuality, even as we properly protect it and ourselves - Passion and Chastity
 - ii. Linking sexuality properly to love and life at all its levels
 - re-integrating “energy” and “wisdom”
 - re-establishing a link to life and fertility, beyond romance and recreation
 - understanding and responding to the inner call of sexuality
 - iii. A healthier theology of God - as the principle of sexuality and fertility
 - iv. The acceptance of the ‘unfinished symphony’
 - “accepting and mourning our virginity”
 - “feeling the goodness of power”

End of program